collybita/trochilus (unseparated), 245. *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*, 250. *Sylvia borin*, 257. *Sylvia melanocephala*, 262. *Turdoides fulvus*, 273. *Oenanthe leucopyga*, 277. *Oenanthe oenanthe*, 308. *Passer simplex*, 317. *Corvus ruficollis*.

References:

Bundy, G. 1976. *The Birds of Libya*. British Ornithologists' Union: London.
Erard, C. & Larigauderie, F. 1972. Migration prénuptiale dans l'ouest de la Libye. *Oiseau Rev. Fr. Orn.* 42: 81–169, 253–284.
National Atlas of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. 1978. Surveying Department, Secretariat of Planning, Tripoli. Arabic/English edition.

Address: Dr. P. J. Cowan, Higher Institute of Technology, Brak, Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

On the status of the Green Pheasant

by Derek Goodwin

Received 5 August 1981

The Green Pheasant of Japan was formerly considered a subspecies of the Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* (e.g. Peters 1934). Later (Delacour 1951, 1977, Schwartz & Schwartz 1951, Cramp *et al.* 1980) it was treated as a distinct species, *Phasianus versicolor*.

I recently had occasion to examine the large series of skins of *Phasianus* in the British Museum (Natural History) collection, which includes representatives of all the major groups of subspecies. As a result I believe that *versicolor* is best treated as a subspecies of *P. colchicus,* unless the mainland forms are to be split up into at least 3 different species, a course I do not advocate.

Three subspecies of *P. colchicus* are currently recognised from the Japanese islands, *versicolor, robustipes* and *tanensis*. They show only slight differences and 2 of them, *versicolor* and *robustipes,* intergrade. For the present purpose (and possibly for most other purposes too) they can best be, and here will be, all included under the name *versicolor*.

Delacour (1977) treats all the mainland forms as subspecies of *P. colchicus* and shows that they can be divided into 4 or possibly 5 main groups which differ most consistently from each other in the colour of their wing coverts (predominantly brown, white or bluish grey) and their lower backs and rumps (predominantly reddish brown, yellowish olive-green, or a silvery bluish green). As Delacour (1977), who has had extensive experience with these and other pheasants in captivity, points out, there are no known differences of voice or behaviour between any of the forms of *Phasianus,* they all interbreed freely if brought together (even at liberty) by human agency, and their hybrid or mongrel offspring are fully fertile. Nevertheless he thought it was appropriate to give *versicolor* specific rank because of its male being "entirely green on mantle and underparts". He differentiated females of *versicolor* as having the "feathers of the mantle mostly black" as against all mainland forms having them "mostly brown".

Schwartz & Schwartz (1951), in a study of *Phasianus* on Hawaii, where the Chinese Ring-necked Pheasant *P. colchicus torquatus,* the Mongolian Pheasant *P. c. mongolicus* and the Green Pheasant *P.* (*c.*) *versicolor* were known to have

been introduced, found some ecological separation, *versicolor,* or phenotypes resembling it, being confined to limited and relatively humid areas. In the "best" *versicolor* habitat, green Pheasants outnumbered ring-necks and (obvious) hybrids by 3 to 2; in other areas where *versicolor* occurred it was outnumbered 4 to 1. They apparently observed no behavioural differences or social segregation.

Thus there is no behavioural evidence to suggest that *versicolor* is less closely related to mainland forms than mainland forms are to each other. Nor, I believe, do the difference in plumage colour warrant such a conclusion. Taking the male of *versicolor* first, the mantle feathers, although they appear all dark green at a little distance, are in fact marked with buff and reddish buff. The scapulars on either side of them are predominantly coppery chestnut. The underparts are entirely dark green or dark bluish green and in this respect *versicolor* does, as Delacour says, differ from mainland races, all of which have some coppery red, chestnut, golden or buff colour at least on the flanks. However, *P. c. elegans,* from the mountains of southwestern Szechuan, northeastern Yunnan and the Shan States of Burma, has most of its underparts dark green like *versicolor,* being coppery red only on the flanks and extreme upper sides of the lower breast. *P. c. suehschanensis,* from northwestern Szechuan and eastern Tibet also has the underparts largely dark green but less extensively so than *P. c. elegans.* Also one of the white-winged subspecies, *P. c. bianchii,* has its entire breast predominantly blackish green, owing to very broad borders of this colour on the feathers.

Thus although the male *versicolor* looks very different from the richly coppery red and golden males of the forms geographically nearest to it, namely *P. c. torquatus* from eastern China and *P. c. karpowi* from Korea, it looks not at all unlike *P. c. elegans.* If, therefore, we consider *versicolor* in relation to the plumage characters—colour of wing coverts and rump—on which Delacour separates his mainland groups of subspecies then we see that it agrees in this point with the grey-winged, silvery bluish green-rumped group, which includes, *inter alia,* its geographically nearest congeners. In more detail, its wing coverts nearly match those of *P. c. elegans* and its rump colouration is very like that on some specimens of *P. c. torquatus.* Its tail feathers also (another point on which there are differences between the main groups of subspecies) are very like those of *P. c. torquatus* except for having a sprinkling of dark dots between the black transverse bars and lacking any definite indication of reddish bars on the purplish-brown outer fringes of the central feathers.

In the case of the female *versicolor* I think that Delacour has rather overemphasised the relative darkness of this form. As with other forms of *Phasianus,* there is an appreciable amount of individual variation and, through abrasive loss of part of the lighter parts of individual feathers, birds in worn plumage look markedly darker than newly-moulted specimens. When allowance is made for plumage state, some female *versicolor* differ from some specimens of *P. c. torquatus* and from most of our specimens of *P. c. elegans* only in having the pale buff areas of the feathers of the underparts speckled (some very lightly, some heavily) with small spots of blackish drab. Some specimens of *versicolor* are admittedly very dark but others are actually lighter in appearance than most of our females of *P. c. elegans.*

It seems probable that in *Phasianus,* as in many other species of birds, an increase of dark plumage pigmentation is correlated with a more humid environment. This may account for the over-all similarity in both sexes of *versicolor* and *elegans* being greater than that between *versicolor* and *torquatus* or *karpowi,* which are nearest to it geographically.

In conclusion, there seem no good grounds for treating *versicolor* as a full species on its plumage characters and as there are not, so far as is known, any other characters in which it differs from mainland forms, it is best treated as conspecific with them.

Two other points resulting from the examination of all the British Museum (Natural History) *Phasianus* specimens seem worth brief mention here. Delacour (1951, 1977) has lucidly explained the incorrectness of the widespread idea that the "melanistic mutant", *P. colchicus* var. *tenebrosus,* originated from hybridisation of *versicolor* with other subspecies. Since some authorities still appear to doubt this, it may be said that, in my opinion, the B.M. specimens, which include very many examples of the dark mutant and some genuine crosses between *versicolor* and other forms, confirm Delacour's views.

Secondly, it is clear that many pheasants which sportsmen have shot or aviculturists kept in Britain, and which they have thought to be specimens of *P. c. torquatus* or *P. c. formosanus,* in fact differ markedly from wild examples of these subspecies, particularly in their having the upper parts of their plumage more *uniformly* light in ground colour, and in showing much less contrast between the feathers of the flanks and those of the lower breast.

References:

Cramp, S. *et al.* (1980). *Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.* Vol. 2. Oxford University Press.

Delacour, J. 1951. *The Pheasants of the World.* Country Life.

— 1977. *The Pheasants of the World.* 2nd ed. Saiga Publishing Co: Surrey.

Peters, J. L. 1934. *Check-list of Birds of the World.* Vol. 2. Harvard University Press.

Schwartz, C. W. & Schwartz, E. R. 1951. An ecological reconnaissance of the Pheasants in Hawaii. *Auk* 68: 281–314.

Address: D. Goodwin, British Museum (Natural History), Tring, Herts. HP23 6AP, England.

The natal pterylosis of *Manacus manacus* (Pipridae)

by Charles T. Collins

Received 26 August 1981

The manakins (Pipridae) are a familiar part of the avifauna of many parts of the Neotropics. Even so, the only information on the natal pterylosis of these subossine birds is confined to unquantified accounts of 5 species. Newly hatched young of *Pipra coronata, P. mentalis, Manacus aurantiacus* and *Chiroxiphia linearis* are reported to have scant or sparse grey or greyish-tan